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## **Three sound-correlated text-structuring devices in pre-Qín philosophical prose**

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# Three sound-correlated text structuring devices in pre-Qín philosophical prose<sup>1</sup>

Wolfgang Behr

The description of sound correlated figures of speech in early Chinese prose – where it was attempted since Jiāng Yǒugào (d. 1851) trailblazing work on prose rhyming at all – typically did not go beyond the analysis of prosodic phenomena occurring in phrase or sentence edge positions, which are moreover subject to relatively strict conditions of adjacency. After a short initial discussion of the problem of how to classify artfully crafted argumentative pre-imperial prose texts, the validity of approaching recurrences within Early Chinese prose in reconstructions, rather than through the intricate veil of its written representation, will be exemplified by looking at three repeatedly encountered phonological figures in Warring States-Han texts and the way they establish textual coherence. For lack of an established terminology, these will be preliminarily be called “rhyme nets”, “assonance chains”, and “paronomastic cadences”. Consideration of the latter category leads to a discussion of its relationship with genuine *figura etymologica*, and its role as a window on the self-awareness of linguistic structure on the part of early Chinese writer.

## 1 Introduction

It is a universal and, indeed, rather trivial property of all forms of verbal art crosslinguistically – whether poetry or prose – to contain recurrent patternings of form, function and meaning. This is particularly obvious in poetry, which inevitably tends to maximize these patternings within universal constraints such as perceptual saliency, attention span and rehearsal memory, as well as against language or tradition-specific thresholds such as relevance (or “deautomization”) and unobtrusiveness, repetitiveness, and, occasionally, performative embedding (cf. Kiparsky 1987, Hogan 1997). It comes as little surprise, then, that it will typically be in the area of poetry that pre-modern works on literary theory first recognize, describe, and eventually analyze hierarchies and arrangements of sound-correlated figures in composed speech, and, by extension, of their respective communicative and aesthetic functions. Thus, while an insight into the dichotomy of form and meaning in writing is possibly implicit already in such statements as Confucius’ famous contrasting of *wén* 文 (pattern, writing, cultural refinement) and *zhì* 質 (substance, disposition)<sup>2</sup>, the earliest sustained discussion of the topic in a

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<sup>1</sup> I wish to thank Joachim Gentz, Matthias Richter, Karen Finney-Kellerhoff and the BJOAF editors for their very helpful comments on an earlier version of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Lúnyǔ* 論語 (12.8: 267): “Patterning goes along with substance, and substance goes along with patterning. The shorn skin of a tiger or leopard is just like the shorn skin of a dog or sheep”

distinctly literary context is to be found in the „Chapter on sounds and metres“ (Shēnglǜ piān 聲律篇) of the *Wénxīn diàolóng* 文心雕龍 (*The spirit of literature and the carving of dragons*), the first comprehensive study of Chinese literary criticism by Liú Xié 劉勰 (465–520).<sup>3</sup>

A demarcation line between poetry and prose is particularly hard to draw in Classical Chinese, as indeed in many other, especially ancient literary languages.<sup>4</sup> It might, however, be justified from the retrospective classifications of Medieval Chinese literary genre theories such as Liú's. On an even more general plane, a seemingly more useful, if equally convoluted functional difference is that between literary and “cultural” texts. This refers to the distinction between texts which are pragmatically determined in the sense that a full appreciation of their contents is contingent upon a knowledge of their communicative settings or functional targets, and which primarily function as means of topicalizing group identities, beliefs and values. Literary texts, on the other hand, are in principle free of such clearcut functional determinations.<sup>5</sup> Even against a very broad delimitation of this type, those master texts of the mid and late Warring States period from which this essay will draw its materials, are rather recalcitrant when it comes to classification: they are typically self-reflexive, abstract, and loaded with intertextual references, thus fully qualifying for modern structuralist definitions of literary texts. Yet at the same time they are, more often than not, tied to certain presuppositions reflecting a particular addressee, a socioeconomic environment, or a whole range of didactic purposes. In this they are not at all different from most Chinese, and, indeed, many specimens of premodern literature in Europe. Moreover, the presence of elaborated structural devices on all core levels of linguistic creativity (phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics) and their arrangement into homologies or equivalences with the contents to be expressed – even if indicative of an increased awareness of the non-communicative functions of language on the part of the writer or speaker – is certainly not a sufficient criterion to assign a particular text to the realm of literariness in a strict functionalist sense. As is well known from many traditions, while there might be a relationship between the *frequency* of such homologies in a text and its primary function(s), there are certainly no straightforward linear correlations. Thus, something as apparently deadpan as land transaction documents

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(文猶質也，質猶文也。虎豹之鞞。猶犬羊之鞞)。

<sup>3</sup>For a heavily commented edition see Lǐ Xíngjié & Chén Guānglěi (1987), for a recent translation Wong, Lo & Lam (1999: 123-125).

<sup>4</sup>*Pace* recent attempts to mathematically define non-random lineation as the criterion for an internal separation of the prose-poetry continuum (Aoyama & Constable 1999). For a less ambitious, albeit more sobering linguistic approach to the problem see Petersson (1982).

<sup>5</sup>See Assmann (1996) on the situation in Egyptian; for interesting comparative perspectives on what constitutes literariness in ancient textual traditions cf. also Michalowski (1993) on Sumerian and Groneberg (1996) on Akkadian.

may bristle with poetic structures,<sup>6</sup> while a highly successful contemporary free verse poem may have consciously shunned all traces of formal versificational intent. We should therefore not be surprised that argumentative texts of the Warring States period, even when covering seemingly prosaic philosophical, technical, historiographic, or scientific topics, tend to employ textual devices, which are commonly associated with more literary works in later Chinese literature or, indeed, in most European traditions, all the more since many of those later works have grown stylistically out of early predecessor texts with utterly different, or at least much more functionally determined dispositions. What justifies the interest in Warring States textual structures, apart from curiosity and sheer aesthetic pleasure, is therefore maybe not a particular intrinsic exceptionality, but the prestige and normative power they managed to unfurl throughout much of the later development of writing in China.

When attempting to classify those elements which structure texts, many contemporary linguistic theories differentiate between textual cohesion and coherence, where cohesion points *beyond* the text proper to areas such as communication pragmatics, text reception and hermeneutics, while coherence remains firmly grounded *within* the text, dealing mainly with the relationship between sentences and the text surface. Just as sentences are usually not completely compositional with respect to the elements which constitute them, texts are notoriously under-determined in a semantic respect. They depend heavily on the not necessarily conscious, but constant disambiguation by the listener/reader who cannot but *assume* coherence within the utterance of a speaker/writer, thereby imputing notions of unity, wholeness or telicity to her or him. In admittedly extreme cases, a text may therefore be perceived as coherent without necessarily being cohesive, but not vice versa. If coherence, then, is the more basic principle governing the internal organization of a text, it might be useful to first look into this area when trying to uncover text structuring devices in pre-Qín Chinese. To this end, we will consider three characteristic examples of such devices, hoping to demonstrate the usefulness of a phonologically informed look through the veil of Chinese characters into the prosodic structure of words behind it, and, *a fortiori*, into the intentions of those who shaped and structured text with them.

## 2 Phonological text structuring devices

Coherence devices can be usefully differentiated further into those encoding recurrence and those establishing inter-sentence connectivity (conjunctions, discourse particles, markers of deixis, anaphoricity or temporality etc.). For reasons of space, I will limit myself to figures of recurrence, particularly phonological recurrence, all the more since it has never been within the exegetic horizon of

<sup>6</sup> See Hurowitz (1997) on Babylonian documents of this type, reviewed in Sassmannshausen (1999). For Zhōu China cf. Lau (1999), which comprises at least nine thoroughly rhymed inscriptions.

traditional commentaries. Most of the premodern commentaries, if deliberating at all upon a phonological property of a text beyond the mere identification of a character reading, have been limited in their phonological attention to the more prominent edge positions of *verse*, covering phenomena such as rhyme, alliteration, and, very rarely, assonance and consonance, if (and only if!) occurring in adjacent text constituents (sentences, breath groups, cola). The most prominent exception to this rule are paronomastic glosses (*shēng xùn* 聲訓), which, however, hardly ever recognize text structuring functions of the related referents implied in a gloss, beyond the more obvious etymological or political considerations.

This narrow focus was considerably widened when, during the heyday of Qīng evidential learning (*kǎozhèngxué*, 考證學), the great phonologist Jiāng Yǒugào 江有誥 (d. 1851)<sup>7</sup> wrote a series of meticulous rhyme tables, not only for the two great classics of poetry – the *Shījīng* 詩經 and the *Chǔcí* 楚辭 – but also for 34 pre-Qín, Qín and Hàn texts, which were traditionally classified as classics (*jīng* 經), master texts (*zǐ* 子), historiography (*shǐ* 史), and miscellaneous writings (*zájiā* 雜家).<sup>8</sup> By this he proved beyond any reasonable doubt that large amounts of early philosophical prose as well as some non-argumentative writings contain massive instances of prose rhyming. Against this background one would not hesitate to call texts like the *Zhuāngzǐ* 莊子, the *Lǎozǐ* 老子, the *Guǎnzǐ* 管子, parts of the *Xúnzǐ* 荀子 etc. ‘prosimetric’ texts (cf. Debon 1986, McCraw 1995). Jiāng’s observations fed directly into Karlgren (1932), who, despite the rather modest title, covered rhyming patterns of quite a few master texts and classics beyond the *Lǎozǐ*, and his work was continued by several Chinese authors throughout the 20th century. Still, all these works remain thoroughly entangled in tradition, since they stubbornly look at equivalences of character readings, not of words represented by them, without ever going beyond verse final or initial recurrences. Longer textual units, like the *zhāng* 章 (section), *piān* 篇 (chapter), *juàn* 卷 (scroll) or even a text as a whole, were not scrutinized with regard to their use of aurally effective devices within the tradition of Chinese phonology, or within the framework of indigenous rhetoric (*xiūcíxué* 修辭學, “word arrangement learning”). This is especially striking in view of the fact that the *zhāng* in particular has been convincingly argued to represent the “basic and constituent unit of early Chinese thought and philosophy” (Gentz 2001: 2, n. 3, Wagner 2004).

<sup>7</sup> For a sketch of his life and work see Wáng Lì (1957: 370-91), Baxter (1992: 169-171).

<sup>8</sup> For a listing of the works covered in Jiāng’s *Qúnjīng yùndòu* 群經韻讀 (Rhymed phrases in the Classics) and *Xiān-Qín yùndòu* 先秦韻讀 (Pre-Qín rhymed phrases), both included in his posthumously published *Yīnxué shí shū* 音學十書 (Ten books on Phonology), see Lǐ Xīnkúí & Mài Yún (1993: 35-38). A diachronic sequel to these works, covering Early Medieval poetry under the title *Hàn-Wèi liù cháo yùnpǔ* 漢魏六朝韻譜 (Rhyme table of the Hàn, Wèi and Six Dynasties periods) was completed but apparently never published, cf. Huáng Yàokūn (2005: 33).

Some of the densely crafted phonological texture encountered in Warring States philosophical texts is generated by the pervasive practice of quotation from earlier, partly oral canons of poetry, which may in turn have been supported by the increased availability of writing – socially as well as in terms of the employed techniques and materials – as a means of storing knowledge across space and time.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, several scholars have argued that many, if not all, pre-Qín texts are patchworks, i.e. collage-like assemblages of preexisting gnomological, parabolic and even satirical building blocks, stemming predominantly from didactic contexts.<sup>10</sup> This is corroborated by several recently excavated texts, which can sometimes be shown to randomly cite other key texts quite out of context, i.e. with no apparent or only very superficial connection with the target text passage, obviously with the aim of generating textual authority and increasing transmission security at any cost (cf. Kern 2005). Equally important was probably a different anthropological setting of philosophical, historiographical or proto-scientific discourse during the “axial age”, which increased attention span, modes of intertextuality, knowledge transmission in text-based school traditions, and other parameters. Apart from pre-structured quoted material, however, we also find more sophisticated ways of exploiting sound-correlated figures of recurrence during the late Zhànguó and well into the Hàn period.

## 2.1 Rhyme nets

A typical variety of transphrastic structuring is what I will call – for lack of a better term – a “rhyme net”, referring to the combination of long-distance prose rhyming in recurrent paragraph final positions with horizontal line-internal assonances. Consider the following example from the *Lǚshì chūnqiū* 吕氏春秋 (Springs and Autumns of Mr. Lǚ), the famous almanac compiled in 239 B.C. by a group of scholars retained by the rich merchant Lǚ Bùwěi 吕不韋 (?–235 B.C.) at the Qín 秦 court, reflecting the advancement of specialist knowledge in many technical and ritual fields, and synthesizing influences from various philosophical schools into a comprehensive manual of governmental control.<sup>11</sup> Here we find a loosely knit rhyme net, marked by shadings in the relevant Old Chinese

<sup>9</sup> A study of early Chinese quotation practices is an urgent desideratum. On the new role of writing as a central cultural and political technique of scholarly lineages beyond state control during this period see Lewis (1999, chap. 1 & 2).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Christian Schwermann’s contribution to this volume.

<sup>11</sup> *Lǚshì chūnqiū* 吕氏春秋 (3.4: 159; unless stated otherwise, all quotations from the classics in this paper refer to the *Zhūzǐ jíchéng* 诸子集成 edition, 8 vols., rpt. Shíjiāzhuāng: Héběi Rénmín chūbǎnshè 1986). For a slightly deviant translation cf. Knoblock & Riegel (2000: 107-8). All rhyming passages from the text are discussed and tentatively dated in Hé Kēgēn (1996).

reconstructions<sup>12</sup> spread out over the text. A structure like this requires a much longer attention span than is common in earlier poetry or political prose, but it is sustained by a series of line internal “horizontal” rhymes and assonances, marked by underlining:

故知知一 [\*ʔit] 。

Thus: If you know how to know the One,

I. 則復歸於樸 [\*p-hrrək]。嗜欲易足 [\*tsək]。取養節薄 [\*pphak]。

不可得也。 [\*pə kkhaj-q tək laj-q]。

You will then return to [primeval] simplicity, [where] lusts and longings  
are easily satisfied,  
where what you take and whereby you nurture yourself is restricted and meager,  
so that you cannot be appropriated [by others].

II. 離世自樂 [\*ŋra<sup>w</sup>k]。中情潔白 [\*bbrak]。

不可量也。 [\*pə kkhaj-q g-raŋ laj-q]。

!

You will renounce the world and rejoice in yourself, you will center in  
on your inner condition,  
will be undiluted and pure,  
so that you cannot be (measured=) restrained [by others].

III. 威不能懼 [\*g<sup>w</sup>ra-s]。嚴不能恐 [\*khroŋ-s]

!

不可服也。 [\*pə kkhaj-q bək laj-q]。

Authorities will be unable to intimidate you, severity will be unable  
to terrorize you,  
so that you cannot be submitted [by others].

故知知一 [\*ʔit] 。

Thus: if you know how to know the One,

IV. 則可動作當務 [\*m(r)o-s]。與時周旋 [\*s-wen] 。

!

不可極也。 [\*pə kkhaj-q g(r)ək laj-q]。

then what you are able to move or create will be suitable for the task,  
spinning along with the cycle of seasons,  
so that you cannot be surpassed [by others].

V. 舉錯以數 [\*s-kro-q]。取與遵理 [\*rə-q] 。

不可惑也。 [\*pə kkhaj-q wwək laj-q]。

You will be promoting and dismissing in accordance with provisions,  
taking and giving with respect to fixed patterns,  
so that you cannot be deluded.

<sup>12</sup>Line final words are noted in Old Chinese reconstructions quoted in brackets. These follow the system of Baxter (1992), accepting all emendations suggested in Sagart (1999). Those glottal stops, which can be shown to function as suffixes in Old Chinese, are rewritten as \*q. The Pulleyblankian A/B syllable types are represented *notationally* by a doubling of the root initial consonant in type A, without suggesting that this necessarily correlates with a phonemic tense/lax or [±ATR] distinction.

- VI. 言無遺者 [\*ta-q]。集肌膚 [\*pa-q]。  
 不可革也。[\*pə kkhaj-q kkrək laj-q]。  
 Your words will be without slips, your muscles and skin tight,  
 so that you cannot be improved [by others].
- VII. 讒人困窮 [\*g(r)uŋ]。賢者遂興 [\*x(r)əŋ]。  
 不可匿也。[\*pə kkhaj-q nnr[i,ə]k laj-q]。  
 Slanderers, although unemployed and poor, worthies, although succeeding  
 and flourishing,  
 cannot be considered close [by you].
- 故知知一 [\*ʔit]。  
 Thus: if you know how to know the One,
- VIII. 則若天地然 [\*nan]。  
 則何事之不勝 [\*pə hlləŋ]。何物之不應 [\*pə ʔ(r)əŋ-s]。  
 then you will be such, as if you were Heaven and Earth,  
 which task, then, will you not be able to overcome,  
 which object will you not be able to respond to?!

Notice that the scheme is not perfect, since several lines (here marked with !) lack the expected poetic features. The text proceeds in an almost meditative meandering fashion, connecting the three cycles of knowing the mystical “One” with seven stages of self-perfection, self-strengthening, and self-ascertainment, until final omnipotence is reached. It is easily imaginable that a text like this was performed<sup>13</sup>, or at least consciously recited, with a prayer-like mindset, which would chime with the enhancement by the meshes of the rhyme net. In its cyclical progression the text is curiously reminiscent of earlier inscriptions like the *Xíngqì yùnmíng* 行氣玉銘 of ca. 400 B.C., a meditative text found on the twelve-sided jade knob of a magic wand or shaman’s staff and kept today in the Tiānjīn Museum of Fine Arts. It describes the circulation of qì 氣 through the practising body in cyclically interconnected trisyllabic rhymed lines.<sup>14</sup>

Warring States rhyme nets of considerable length and cyclicity are sometimes augmented by overt numeration, adding to the impression of a quasi-catechetical treatise or philosophical primer, with strong mnemotechnic features. This type of style is encountered several times in the *Lǚshì chūnqiū*, but its champion is without doubt Hánfēizǐ 韓非子 (ca. 280 – ca. 233 B.C.)<sup>15</sup>. Consider for a typical example in this mode of speaking the section on the so-called *bā shù* 八術, or “eight vicissitudes”, which lead to the loss of control of a ruler, i.e. “bedfellows”, “associates”, “elders (on the paternal side)”, “breeding disaster”, “the people”,

<sup>13</sup> For a general discussion on performative aspects of Early Chinese writing see Kern (forthcoming 2006).

<sup>14</sup> For a discussion and translation of this text see Willhelm (1948) and Roth (1997).

<sup>15</sup> See for a collection of examples Jīn Yì (1984).



“current (slogans)”, “authority and strength”, and the “four regions of the world”, respectively.<sup>16</sup> Without becoming too distracted by the painfully moralistic orientation of the passage, let us simply focus on its structural properties:

凡人臣之所道成姦者有八術: [introduction]

“There are eight vicissitudes by which the servants for the people (ministers) will commit evils:”

A	B	C	D
ENUMERATION	QUESTION	NARRATIVE EXPOSITION	RESUMPTIVE ANSWER
<p>一曰 在同床</p> <p><b>*<u>ʔit</u> wat</b> dzzə-q ddon dzraŋ</p>	<p>何謂 同床</p> <p><b>*ggaj wət-s</b> ddon dzraŋ</p>	<p>曰：貴夫人，愛孺子，便僻好色，此人主之所惑也。託於燕處之虞，乘醉飽之時，而求其所欲，此必聽之術也。為人臣者內事之以金玉，使惑其主，</p> <p>曰：優笑侏儒，左右近習，此人主未命而唯唯，未使而諾諾，先意承旨，觀貌察色以先主心者也。此皆俱進俱退，皆應皆對，一辭同軌以移主心者也。人臣者內事之以金玉玩好，外為之行不法使化主，</p>	<p>此之謂 同床</p> <p><b>*tshej-q tə wət-s</b> ddon dzraŋ</p>
<p>二曰 在旁</p> <p><b>*<u>nij-s</u> wat</b> dzzə-q ppraŋ</p>	<p>何謂 在旁</p> <p><b>*ggaj wət-s</b> dzzə-q ppraŋ</p>	<p>曰：側室公子，人主之所親愛也，大臣廷吏，人之與計畢議，人主之所必聽也。為人臣者事公子側室以音聲子女收大臣廷吏以辭言，處約言事事成則進爵益祿，以勸其心使犯其主，</p> <p>曰：人主樂美宮室臺池、好飾子女狗馬以娛其心，此人主之殃也。為人臣者盡民力以美宮室臺池，重賦歛以飾子女狗馬，以娛其主而亂其心、從其所欲，而樹私利其間，</p>	<p>此之謂 在旁</p> <p><b>*tshej-q tə wət-s</b> dzzə-q ppraŋ</p>
<p>三曰 父兄</p> <p><b>*<u>s-hlləm</u> wat</b> ba-q hmraŋ</p>	<p>何謂 父兄</p> <p><b>*ggaj wət-s</b> ba-q hmraŋ</p>	<p>曰：為人臣者散公財以說民人，行小惠以取百姓，使朝廷市井皆勸譽己，以塞其主而成其所欲，</p> <p>曰：人者，固壅其言談，希於聽論議，易移以辯說。為人臣者求諸侯之辯士、養國中之能說者，使之以語其私，為巧文之言，流行之辭，示之以利勢，懼之以患害，施屬虛辭以壞其主，</p>	<p>此之謂 父兄</p> <p><b>*tshej-q tə wət-s</b> ba-q hmraŋ</p>
<p>四曰 養殃</p> <p><b>*<u>s-(h)lij-s</u> wat laŋ-q q-laŋ</b></p>	<p>何謂 養殃</p> <p><b>*ggaj wət-s</b> laŋ-q q-laŋ</p>	<p>曰：君人者，以群臣百姓為威強者也。群臣百姓之所善則君善之，非群臣百姓之所善則君不善之。為人臣者，聚帶劍之客養死之以彰其威，明為己者必利，不為己者必死，以恐其群臣百姓而行其私，</p> <p>曰：君人者，國小則事大國，兵弱則畏強兵，大國之所索，小國必聽，強兵之所加，弱兵必服。為人臣者，重賦歛，盡府庫，虛其國以事大國，而用其威求誘其君；甚者舉兵以聚邊境而制歛於內，薄者數內大使以震其君，使之恐懼，</p>	<p>此之謂 養殃</p> <p><b>*tshej-q tə wət-s</b> laŋ-q q-laŋ</p>
<p>五曰民萌</p>	<p>何謂 民萌</p>	<p>曰：貴夫人，愛孺子，便僻好色，此人主之所惑也。託於燕處之虞，乘醉飽之時，而求其所欲，此必聽之術也。為人臣者內事之以金玉，使惑其主，</p>	<p>此之謂 民萌</p>

<sup>16</sup> *Hánfēizǐ* (9: 151). For a good rendering of the whole passage see the forthcoming translation by Christoph Harbsmeier, from which I take these English terms.

* <u>ŋna-q</u> wat mi[ŋ,n] mraŋ	*ggaj wət-s mi[ŋ,n] mraŋ	曰：優笑侏儒，左右近習，此人主未命而唯唯，未使而諾諾，先意承旨，觀貌察色以先主心者也。此皆俱進俱退，皆應皆對，一辭同軌以移主心者也。人臣者內事之以金玉玩好，外為之行不法使化主，	*tshej-q tə wət-s mi[ŋ,n] mraŋ
六曰 流行	何謂 流行	曰：側室公子，人主之所親愛也，大臣廷吏，人之與計畢議，人主之所必聽也。為人臣者事公子側室以音聲子女收大臣廷吏以辭言，處約言事事成則進爵益祿，以勸其心使犯其主，	此之謂 流行
* <u>Cə-rruk</u> wat Cə-lu ggraŋ	*ggaj wət-s Cə-lu ggraŋ	曰：人主樂美宮室臺池、好飾子女狗馬以娛其心，此人主之殃也。為人臣者盡民力以美宮室臺池，重賦歛以飾子女狗馬，以娛其主而亂其心、從其所欲，而樹私利其間，	*tshej-q tə wət-s Cə-lu ggraŋ
七曰 威強	{強}何謂 威強	曰：為人臣者散公財以說民人，行小惠以取百姓，使朝廷市井皆勸譽己，以塞其主而成其所欲，	此之謂 威強
* <u>s-hnit</u> wat ʔuj kaŋ	*ggaj wət-s ʔuj kaŋ	曰：人者，固壅其言談，希於聽論議，易移以辯說。為人臣者求諸侯之辯士、養國中之能說者，使之以語其私，為巧文之言，流行之辭，示之以利勢，懼之以患害，施屬虛辭以壞其主，	*tshej-q tə wət-s ʔuj kaŋ
八曰 四方	何謂 四方	曰：君人者，以群臣百姓為威強者也。群臣百姓之所善則君善之，非群臣百姓之所善則君不善之。為人臣者，聚帶劍之客養死之以彰其威，明為己者必利，不為己者必死，以恐其群臣百姓而行其私，	此之謂 四方
* <u>p-rret</u> wat s-(h)lij-s paŋ	*ggaj wət-s s-(h)lij-s paŋ	曰：君人者，國小則事大國，兵弱則畏強兵，大國之所索，小國必聽，強兵之所加，弱兵必服。為人臣者，重賦歛，盡府庫，虛其國以事大國，而用其威求誘其君；甚者舉兵以聚邊境而制歛於內，薄者數內大使以震其君，使之恐懼，	*tshej-q tə wət-s s-(h)lij-s paŋ

## [conclusion]

凡此八者，人臣之所以道成姦，世主所以壅劫，失其所有也，不可不察焉。  
 “Overall, since these eight are vicissitudes by which the servants for the people (ministers) will commit evils, by which the lord of the world is blocked and taken into custody, and through which he loses what belongs to him, one should not fail to conduct an investigation on them.”

Here, the vices are first enumerated (A: “one, two ... eight is called X”), then put to question (B: “what is called X?”), explained by a narrative exposition, typically bordering on autocommentary (C: “it is said that ...”), which is eventually concluded by a resumptive repetition of the vice (D: “this is what is called X”). Structurally speaking, it turns out that the vices are tied together as a set not only through enumeration, but also by the fact that their designations are rhymed in one long “vertical” series in \*-aŋ, which by virtue of its “horizontal” recurrence in A, B and D frames the unstructured narrative exposition part C into a densely clustered whole. This is strengthened even further by the etymological (ablaut) connection of

yuē 曰 (\*wat) / wèi 謂 (\*wət-s) / wèi 謂 (\*wət-s) “call, be called” in A, B and D, which spans the horizontal axis, further tightening the eight commandments for the ruler.

## 2.2 Assonance chains

Slightly less easily discernible, we find the same technique employed, using a chain of assonances rather than rhyming proper, in combination with an argumentative-catechetical enumeration, for instance in Hánfēi’s chapter on the “seven techniques [conducive to] peace and the six ways [conducive to] danger”:<sup>17</sup>

安危	1				ʔʔan	ŋ <sup>w</sup> oj
安術有七	2		ʔʔan	m-lut	wə-q	s-hnit
危道有六	3		ŋ <sup>w</sup> oj	llu-q	wə-q	Cə-rruk
安術	4				ʔʔan	m-lut
一曰	5				<u>ʔit</u>	wat
賞罰隨是非		s-taŋ	bat	s-loj	de-q	pəj
二曰	6				<u>nij-s</u>	wat
禍福隨善惡		gg <sup>w</sup> aj-q	pək	s-loj	s-lan-q	ʔʔak
三曰	7				<u>s-hlləm</u>	wat
死生隨法度		sij-q	sreŋ	s-loj	pap	llak-s
四曰	8				<u>s-(h)lij-s</u>	wat
有賢不肖			wə-q	gin	pə	s-llew-s
而無愛惡			nə	ma	ʔʔət-s	ʔʔak-s
五曰	9				<u>ŋŋa-q</u>	wat
有愚智			wə-q		ŋo-ʔ	tre-s
而無非譽			nə	ma	pəj	la
六曰	10				<u>Cə-rruk</u>	wat
有尺寸			wə-q		thak	tsshun-s
而無意度			nə	ma	ʔ(r)ək-s	llak

<sup>17</sup> Hánfēizǐ (25: 151).

七曰	11				<u>s-hnit</u>	wat	
有信			wə-q			s-nin-s	
而無詐			nə	ma		N-tssrak-s	
危道	12				ŋ <sup>w</sup> oj	llu-q	
一曰	13				<u>ʔit</u>	wat	
削於繩之內		s-hle <sup>w</sup> k	ʔa	s-C-ləŋ	tə	nuup-s	
二曰	14				<u>nij-s</u>	wat	
斷割於法之外		tton-q	kkat	ʔa	pap	tə	N-wwat-s
三曰	15				<u>s-hləm</u>	wat	
利人之所害		(Cə-)rit-s	nin	tə	s-kra-q	N-kkat-s	
四曰	16				<u>s-(h)lij-s</u>	wat	
樂人之所禍		g-rra <sup>w</sup> k	nin	tə	s-kra-q	ggwaj-q	
五曰	17				<u>ŋŋa-q</u>	wat	
危人於所安		ŋ <sup>w</sup> ok	nin	ʔa	s-kra-q	ʔʔan	
六曰	18				<u>Cə-rruk</u>	wat	
所愛不親			s-kra-q	ʔʔət-s	pə	tshin	
所惡不疏			s-kra-q	ʔʔak-s	pə	s-ra	

In this passage on “means of maintaining security when in power”, we observe vertical enumeration (underlined) interacting with two interlocking chains of phonological recurrences: the word *yuē*, which introduces a new category at each phonologically repetitive occurrence, leaves room for the appearance of the alternating chain of assonating lines (in gray boxes). Moreover, the beginning and the end of the passage are marked by two pairs of cross-line root alliterations in concepts central to the whole chapter (*shù* 術 : *dào* 道, techniques and methods, *ài* 愛 : *wù* 惡, love and hate). With the short interruption of lines 12-13, which thereby receive strong focus, the assonating lines extend throughout the whole passage. Furthermore, the assonance chain continues to reappear along with the keyword of the whole chapter – *ān* 安 (peace), which climbs up an echelon structure across a long passage of text, which I am not able to quote here in full, but which can be summarized as follows:

如此 19-22      |23-29 | 故 30-33 | 故 34-45 安 |  
                          |47-60 | 故 61-65 安之術也 | 66-69 |  
 如此 69-70      |72-78 安 |79-84 |  
                          如此 85-86 |

The passage culminates in the reappearance of *ān* at the beginning of line 87, which, along with the following line, also distantly echoes the assonance chain from the beginning of the chapter at the line end:

安危在是非，不在於強弱 [\*nak]，  
 存亡在虛實，不在於衆寡 [\*kk<sup>w</sup>ra-q]  
 “peace and danger are grounded in being right as opposed to wrong,  
 not in being strong as opposed to weak,  
 existence and perishment are grounded in being empty as opposed to full,  
 not in being many as opposed to few.”

Structures like this are pervasive in the philosophical discourse of the period. Inseparable from more pedestrian concerns, i.e. mnemonic and didactic purposes, these structures were certainly capable of embedding complex political or philosophical arguments within an intricate phonological texture and thus to integrate them into a haunting and persuasive aesthetic environment.

## 2.3 Paronomastic cadence

One decidedly new stylistic element of the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C., which was by and large absent in earlier prose texts, is the combination of such nets and chains with paronomasia and occasionally, with symmetrical arrangements of lexical roots<sup>18</sup>, i.e. genuine *figura etymologica*. Consider the following particularly fine example, again from the *Lǚshì chūnqiū* 吕氏春秋:

### Translation

1. Anciently, the former sage kings,
2. perfected themselves, and All-under-Heaven was perfected,
3. ordered themselves, and All-under-Heaven was ordered.
4. Therefore:
5. He who is well-versed in resonance, does not persevere with resonance, but with sound,
6. he who is well-versed in shadows, does not persevere with shadows, but with form.
7. He who is acting on behalf of All-under-Heaven, does not persevere with All-under-Heaven, but with himself.
8. It is said in the Odes:
9. Pure person, lord's son
10. Your decorum is unchangeable
11. Your decorum is unchangeable
12. You rectify [yourself for] the city-statelets of the four realms.
13. This is what is meant by “rectifying it within oneself.”

<sup>18</sup> Using the notion of the lexical root in the sense of Sagart (1999).

TEXT	L	*OC
昔者先聖王	1	sak ta ssər <u>hllen</u> -s waŋ
成其身而天下成	2	deŋ gə <u>hnin</u> nə <u>hllin</u> .ggra-q deŋ-s
治其身而天下治	3	lrə gə <u>hnin</u> nə <u>hllin</u> .ggra-q lrə-s
故	4	kka-q
善響者不於響於聲	5	s-lan-q xan-q <u>ta</u> -q pə ʔa xan-q ʔa <u>hlen</u>
善影者不於影於形	6	s-lan-q ʔran-q <u>ta</u> -q pə ʔa ʔran-q ʔa <u>ggen</u>
為天下者不於天下於身	7	w(r)aj <u>hllin</u> .gra-q <u>ta</u> -q pə ʔa <u>hllin</u> .gra-q ʔa <u>hnin</u>
詩曰	8	s-ta wat
『淑人君子	9	s-ti <sup>w</sup> k nin kur tsə
其儀不忒	10	gə ŋ(r)aj pə <u>hllək</u>
其儀不忒	11	gə ŋ(r)aj pə <u>hllək</u>
正是四國』	12	teŋ de-q s-(h)lij-s k-wwək
言正諸身	13	ŋan teŋ-s ta <u>hnin</u>
也	14	llaj-q

This is a passage from a text about the sage kings of old, about the relationship between sound, the body, and the universe, which moreover comprises a *shī* 詩 poem quotation (from *Máoshī* 152.3, “Shījiū” 鳴鳩 [Cuckoo]), which must have enjoyed some popularity during the Warring States period, judging from quotations in excavated texts. In this text we find a carefully woven rhyme net (marked by shaded boxes), including some slant rhymes typical of the period (\*-eŋ : \*-in), which connects not only the line end positions of the argument vertically, but also positions within the line and at its beginning. Moreover the rhyme “points” *laterally* to the quoted poem, which is about uprightness (*zhèng* 正), and thoroughly attached by this very rhyme word to the rest of the structure. Most rhyme words are also connected by initial alliteration (marked by lines), and again, this particular alliteration is a feature which we find mirrored in the *Shī* satellite poem, even in a prosodically prominent edge position. Crucially, the rhymes and alliterations encountered form what I will call a “paronomastic cadence”, in the sense that they connect words which share phonological material, commonly attested in later paronomastic glosses. Some of these reflect genuine morphological relationships, which must have still been felt at the time this piece was created. To separate this net of relationships from the rest of the text, the residual part is

furthermore tightly structured by an assonance chain (marked by dashed lines). All of this works together seamlessly to associate the motives of *rectification* via self-cultivation with the concepts of ‘sageliness’, ‘acuity’ and ‘sonorance’.

This time-honoured theme is further developed in a number of late pre-Qín and Hàn texts, especially those which discuss music as a reflection and means of appropriate rulership, as a veritable technique, as it were, for keeping the world in balance (cf. De Woskin 1982). Musical metaphors such as the pitch pipe standards (*lǜ* 律) for the rule of law or the notes on the pentatonic scale for the basic social relationships abound. But it is not only through metaphors and more commonly, metonymy, that such arguments are enhanced. Equally frequent is the device of paronomasia. In Western rhetoric, paronomasia is an ancient concept, namely one of the three infamous Gorgianic figures (on which more below). It was considered by post-Gorgianic authors as a device which should only be used in elevated or downright pompous passages. Furthermore, it was thought of as a *virtus* only if employed in non-adjacent text constituents, but as a *vitium*, if occurring in contact positions. *Figura etymologica*, on the other hand, is not a classical concept at all, where related figures are usually found under the headings *polyptoton*, *annominatio* or, indeed, *paronomasia*. The term *f.e.* was created by the German classicist Christian August Lobeck (1781–1860) in his *Paralipomena Grammaticae Graecae* of 1837 and first applied to Latin in a dissertation by Gustav Landgraf (1857–1932; *De figuris etymologicis linguae latinae*, Erlangen 1881), who showed that in Latin, unlike in Greek, the *f.e.* is typical of the colloquial language. Loosely speaking, while paronomasia concerns all association of words which share a certain amount of surface phonetic material, *f.e.* presupposes a genuine etymological, i.e. derivational connection between the punning words.

In Old Chinese, where paronomasia was extremely popular in late Warring States and Hàn philosophical discourse, this means that genuine *f.e.* implies identity of the root of a lexeme stripped of all other affixal materials (with the possible exception of ablaut and other stem-alternating procedures). Consider the following typical example, which connects back to the *Lǚshì chūnqiū* text thematically. In the *Bǎihǔtōng* 白虎通 (23:47), a text of 79 A.D., which reflects the discussions held in 58 A.D. between high-ranking government officials and Confucian scholars in the so-called “White tiger hall”, we find for instance the following passage on the ‘clairaudient’ sage :

聖人者何？聖者，通也，道也，聲也。  
道無所不通，明無所不照，聞聲知情...

“What is a *shèngrén* (sage):

‘to be sage’ is	<i>shèng</i>	< * <i>syengH</i>	< * <i>hllen-s</i>
‘to communicate’	<i>tōng</i>	< * <i>thuwnɡ</i>	< * <i>hllun</i>
‘to enunciate’	<i>dào</i>	< * <i>dawX</i>	< * <i>llu-q</i>
‘to resound’	<i>shēng</i>	< * <i>syeng</i>	< * <i>hlen</i>

There is nothing with which [the sage’s] *dào* will not communicate, that his refulgence will not shine through. Listening to the sounds he knows the inner condition of things ...”

Crosslinguistically, *f.e.* is found to be a figure which interlinks concepts in an almost subconscious fashion. Like rhyme, which is “a bond, a semantic glue, which identifies things which under other circumstances fly apart” (Saussy 1997: 522) in verse, *f.e.* associates concepts by imbuing them with a genealogical link, with *natural* morphological correspondences, via the innermost mechanics of language, thereby fusing the primeval unity of tradition into a scattered present and, vice versa, allowing insights into ancient native speaker intuitions. It is therefore very typical of archaic stages of language development, in which it has a decidedly magical or religious ring (cf. Smith 2002). But it also continues up to the most language-conscious modern philosophers and writers as a very powerful ornament violating the *arbitraire du signe* in a deeply meaningful way, namely by associating two different extralinguistic referents with two identical forms. In this passage we have a paronomastic combination of ‘sageliness’, ‘sound’, ‘communication’ and, obliquely, the ‘way’ through the medium of its cognate ‘to speak, enunciate’. Among these connections the one between ‘to be sage’ and ‘to sound’ is genuine *f.e.*, while that between ‘to communicate’ or ‘to enunciate’ and the ‘sage’ is mere paronomasia. In earlier materials, such as the *Lǚshì chūnqū* (18,3:110, cf. de Woskin 1982: 32, Knoblock & Riegel 2000: 448), the set of associations of the word ‘sage’ is usually limited to the one we see in this rhymed characterisation, give or take the word *qìng* 磬 (lithophone), the musical instrument of the sage.

故聖聽於無聲

[OC \**hlen-s* nin *hllen* ?a ma *hlen*],

視於無形

[OC \**N-k-lij-q* ?a mag *geen*]

“Therefore, the sage listens to what has no sound,  
looks into what has no form ...”,

An analysis of the underlying morphological connections between the members of this *f.e.* along the lines of the morphological model provided in Sagart (1999) and Jin Lixīn (2002) would look like this<sup>19</sup>:

<sup>19</sup> For a different, although not fully incompatible approach to this word family cf. Boltz (1994: 115-6).



	CHAR	MC < OC	GLOSSES	MORPHOLOGY/ DERIVATION	PROPOSED FUNCTION
a.	聲 <i>shēng</i>	< <i>syeng</i> < * <i>hleŋ</i>	i. “voice, sound” ii. “resound, make sound”	[base]	—
b.	聽 <i>tīng</i>	< <i>theng</i> < * <i>hlleŋ</i>	„listen, listen to, listen in on“	[ATR]-ablaut [b. ← a.]	v(t). denominal
c.	聽 <i>tìng</i>	< <i>thengH</i> < * <i>hlleŋ-s</i>	“listen to, heed (advice), obey”	[ATR]-ablaut + *-s [c. ← b.]	vt. denominal (exoactive)
d.	聖 <i>shèng</i>	< <i>syengH</i> < * <i>hleŋ-s</i>	“sage” (← “resonator”)	*-s [d. ← a.]	mediopassive deverbal n.
e.	磬 <i>qìng</i>	< <i>khengH</i> < * <i>k-hlleŋ-s</i>	“lithophone” (← “what one listens to”)	*k- + *-s [e. ← c.]	n. deverbal [+countable, concrete]

Since all elements of this word family occur in a morphologically principled way, we are perfectly entitled to call this paronomasia *f.e.* and to consider its cooccurrence with a rhyme chain as the one above a particularly early case of paronomastic cadence.

### 3 Envoi

Traditions of artfully crafted speech in European antiquity originally arose from the realm of the public presentation of prayers, i.e. in the context of performative use of religious language, as well as from the study of non-habitual usages of language in judicial negotiations between competing communities. Rhetoric as a science of such specialized forms of public speech came about with a foreigner, the Sicilian envoy to Greece Gorgias (trad. 483–275 B.C.). Ever since Isocrates (436–338 B.C.) and Plato (427–347 B.C.) he has been criticised for exaggerating the usage of particular forms of expression, the so-called Gorgianic figures. It is striking that they include precisely those devices, which also loom large early on in pre-Qín prose: parallelism and antithetic structuring, usage of assonances, and paronomastic punning (*isokolon*, *homoiopoton/homoiteleuton* and *paronomasia*). Plato senses a lack of intellectual honesty in such overbearing usage of figures. Artful speech, he argues, should not only offer guidance and persuasion, but “knowledge about how to speak good” (*epistêmê tou eu legein*), i.e. *good* in an aesthetic *and* in an ethical sense. Reading statements like this in the *Gorgias* and *Menandros* dialogues, one can almost hear Hánfēizǐ’s uneasiness with the same problem, when he says: (19.49: 1066):

Notice, however, that unlike Plato, he does so, in an exquisitely crafted, assonating statement. Little reflects the exuberance of Warring States prose art better than poetic criticisms of rhetorical embellishments like the following, which, I think, should be read as a rare instance of a tongue-in-cheek self-criticism by the all too eloquent autoreferential elocutor (5.15: 267):

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